

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

NOTES OF TRAVEL IN THE OLD WORLD.

Written for the National Intelligencer by a Citizen of Washington.

RAMBLES ABOUT CONSTANTINOPLE.

There has been such a halo of romance thrown around the whole East by a certain class of writers who see every thing through the spectacles of genius, (sometimes very large spectacles, that magnify to a wonderful extent; sometimes common quizzing glasses, highly colored, often very crooked glass, with bubbles in the centre), that the bare idea of a *Harem* is enough to set one off in ecstasies. Who is there with a spark of enthusiasm that can approach Constantinople for the first time without a palpitating heart and a thrilling anticipation of something extraordinary, something to lift up the soul above this earth to a realm of hours; not that he can recall any particular passage in any thing he has read to conjure up such visions, but the essence of the whole, bubbling up through the memory, gives a tone to one's aspirations for the beautiful. All the fervid imagery of Lalla Rookh; the fascinating splendor of *Anastasis*; the glowing eloquence of *Ethen*, fill the mind somehow or other with extraordinary anticipations; a glimmering of something unearthly; a foreshadowing of Paradise. The *Harem* becomes a chief ornament in this Paradise, and the perfumes of flowers, and the cooling spray of fountains, and all the witchery of beauty and innocence reclining on soft Persian rugs, involuntary crowd upon the mind. Every *gashmak* is supposed to cover the features of a *Gulbeyran* or *Dadu*; every grated window to shed light upon an inner world of beauty, the living and breathing realization of that voluptuous picture in *Dan* something, (what a bore it is to forget names; but you know that I don't read *Byron*), that scene of the sleeping beauties of the *Harem*, where innocent maidens dream of apples, and bees, and butterflies, and such things. Never was an unfortunate admirer of the sex worked up to such a pitch of enthusiastic expectation as your friend of the present writing. It was a purely Platonic devotion to beauty, of course. The first thought upon touching the romantic soil of *Stamboul* was of *yashmaks*, and dark flashing eyes, and forms of angelic contour. For a while I thought seriously of shutting my eyes the very first petticoat I should see fluttering in the breeze; but eyes are indispensable where the *hamal* are continually bringing their battering rams to bear on one's head. At last a bevy of chattering damsels loomed up in the distance bearing down toward me. Good gracious, what voices! The croaking of ravens would have been music to the coarse masculine sounds that distracted my ear. It was the most barbarous gobbling of gutturals I have ever heard. Black eyes there were, to be sure, black enough all round, even underneath; which was rather a dirty sort of blackness. The *yashmaks* dropped accidentally, as they generally do, when the observant Frank, and there are no Turks near. Every vestige of enchantment vanished in a moment. There was not a single passable face in the crowd. The features were coarse and sensual; the teeth disgustingly dark; the costume slovenly and unbecoming. As if conscience-stricken, after having exposed so much beauty to infidel eyes, they hastily drew the covering over their mouths, leaving the upper part of the face partially visible, and altogether denuding the breast. After they had passed I turned to a different view, in the faint hope of discovering some compensating attraction. The case was now still worse. As they drew up their loose cloaks, and gathered around them sundry highly-colored and tawdry dragery, the names of which it is impossible to remember, their bare legs glistened underneath, buried under the ankle in yellow slipshod boots and slippers; and they waddled over the rough stones very much like a parcel of ducks, making such awkward attempts at progress that it was quite distressing to see them. Surely the Turkish boots for females must have been devised by some clever fellow, who had in view the impossibility of their running away in them.

It would be unfair, perhaps, to judge of the whole sex from these specimens; so I reserved my final judgment until I should see something more of Turkish beauty. Since then I have seen every variety that can be seen beyond the sacred precincts of the *Harem*, from the highest to the lowest, and I must confess that I have seen very little to change my original impression. What there may be concealed in cages and fed on cakes and rose water, and never suffered to be rudely gazed at by the air that common mortals breathe, I do not know from personal experience, having never been in the domestic circle of a Turk in my life when the ladies were present; nor do I anticipate the pleasure soon, unless my friend, *Abdul Meschid*, should take it into his head to invite me to a family tea-party, which is not likely. Let it not be supposed, however, that I entertain any hostile feeling towards the ladies of Constantinople. There is occasionally a pretty face to be seen, a young, round, doll-like thing, that is very much admired by the Turks; nice plump little boys, with black eye-brows and thick lashes, soft peachy cheeks, and the softest possible expression. I saw one on the bridge near *Galata* that quite struck a tenderness through me. She was about fifteen, and as prettily cooed as a Turkish lady can be without a change of fashion. Dropping the white veil that covered her mouth as I passed, she gave me a good opportunity of admiring her bewitching features, and to be candid they were very bewitching. The form of her face was round, like a full moon; her complexion of the purest transparency, just tinged with the rosy hue of health; her nose small and round, making a very beautiful natural division between her cheeks; her eyes—but here was the killing attraction—they were so large and wide open, so deeply beautifully black, so gaseous-like in their innocence of expression, or lack of expression; so indicative of a repose of soul, or unconsciousness of soul; so hedged around with black lashes and eye-brows, or black paint, that made the very darkness there more beautiful than light elsewhere; so liquid with natural tear-drops, or the glare of the sun; these, these it was that brought on the tenderness; these, and the lips which were parted with a smile of triumph, and looked as if they had just been kissed by the breath of a frosty morning, or bathed in twilight dew, or sweetened with a stick of candy, which she happened to be sucking at the moment; and her form! it was so round and soft, and shook so like jelly at every step. But it is entirely useless to undertake a description of her undulating walk; it was the very poetry of motion; rolling in her yellow boots as gracefully as ever rolled a seventy-four in the trades. *Mashallah!* I saw no more that day.

The Armenian women are very much superior in personal beauty to any I have seen in Constantinople; indeed, to any of the Oriental castes, not excepting the far-famed Circassians. The best specimens of the latter that I had the fortune to see were gross and expressionless in features, and without that compactness and elasticity of form which the more civilized world has assumed to be essential in female beauty. A certain obesity, very attractive to semi-barbarous people, is cultivated to perfection in the Circassians, and the most highly admired seemed to be those who bear the greatest resemblance to a balloon, and who are least capable of exercising the powers of locomotion. The Armenians, however, are tall and graceful, and of much greater delicacy of feature, and in form they approximate more nearly than I have seen to what has been assumed by common consent as the standard of perfection. I saw many in my rambles about the heights of *Chambula* who were really fine looking women; their dark hair twisted loosely under their head-dress; their complexion of the most delicate texture; their eyes bright and not altogether effusive, fringed with long black lashes; and their form showing to advantage in a costume resembling what certain of the fair sex at home have attempted to force into fashion in our matter-of-fact part of the world. And here, by way of parenthesis, let me hope that, should that costume prevail, it will never be followed by any attempt to introduce other oriental fashions, such as smoking the *chibouk* and sharing in domestic communities the same husband.

The life of these inmates of the *Harem* has been delineated by writers who have had access to their society; but it has been done in such a way as to throw a halo of

romance around them which has no foundation in reality. I have conversed with many intelligent Frank residents of Constantinople on the subject, and have been assured that these accounts of the innocent and luxurious seclusion in which they spend their lives are in the main a tissue of absurdities, gotten up by enthusiastic authors for the purpose of making readable books; that such books are sought with avidity, where the plain truth would make no impression. People are determined to feed the imagination upon something, and those who furnish them with the material are naturally disposed to make it as palatable as possible. The fact is, life in the *Harem* is one of absolute servitude and disgusting sensuality. Few, even in the highest ranks, understand how to read and write, and their conversation is only trifling idleness. They are purchased as slaves, treated as slaves, and valued according to their capacity to reach the most approved standard of degradation. Encouraged in all that is revolting to the better feeling of man's nature, it is to be wondered at that they do not occupy the position of companions. It may be set down as an axiom, demonstrated by all past experience, that in no country where the position of woman is so utterly degraded can a people ever attain to a more exalted rank than that of a slavish and semi-barbarous nation. *Abdul Meschid* build frigates, encourage steam navigation and cotton factories, patronize model farms, surround his court with all the enlightening influences of foreign diplomacy; listen to disinterested plans for increasing the power and prosperity of the Turkish people; but until he learns the great secret that women must be companions, and not mere toys his efforts, or the efforts of others, will be in vain; and the mass of the Turks will remain as they have ever been, an ignorant and slavish people.

It has been my fortune to travel in many foreign lands, and to mingle with many strange people as a spectator of passing events; and now, after years of wandering in almost every clime, I turn from the sad contemplation of their social condition with a grateful heart to our own free and happy country; where, amid all the turmoils of political strife, all the asperities of opinion upon matters of local import, all the differences of position that arise from the natural differences of our organization, there is a purity of sentiment in social life that has never been obtained in any country in this eastern world. It is refreshing, after inhaling the polluted atmosphere of the principal cities of Europe, to look back upon our own happy homes and friends, and draw health and vigor and inspiration from a contemplation of the exalted condition of woman in America—subject to no restraints but the dictates of virtue, free in the exercise of all the rights that are claimed by the best and purest of the sex; respected because they command respect; beloved because they are womanly; admired because they are too modest to demand admiration. It is not of the giddy and the thoughtless, who parade their jewelled charms in the arena of fashion; not of the "rawlers in public," who seek to overturn the whole fabric of society; not of them that are given to unseemly display, either of thought or person, that I would speak; but of the "chaste keepers of home," of the gentle and the sympathizing, who "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep;" these are the women of America, who, unknown to fame, are esteemed the highest; who, unadorned, are adorned the most.

During my rambles about Constantinople and the suburbs, my attention has been frequently attracted by the strange and dilapidated appearance of the Mahometan burial-grounds. Much of the beautiful effect of the view from the Bosphorus arises from the groves of tall green cypresses that mingle their foliage with the mosques and minarets, and stand out in bold relief on every hill-side. Wherever they cover any considerable extent of ground, it is to afford shade and protection to a public cemetery. The largest, perhaps, of all the Mahometan burial-grounds is that near *Scutari*, on the Asiatic side, which extends over a distance of three miles along the road. It is beautifully shaded by a thick forest of cypresses, and forms, in the summer time, a favorite retreat for the idle and gossiping, who go over in great numbers from the city every afternoon. Here may be seen, in fine weather, groups of women of various castes sitting on the graves, smoking their *chibouks* and sipping their coffee; others, half-naked, chattering and lively, endeavoring to kill time; all unattended, except by female servants, for it is beneath the dignity of the male population ever to associate in public with women. It is a curious picture of gay, fluttering life, mingled with the mouldering tombs of the silent and ghastly dead. Often, when disposed to indulge in reflection, I come over here to read the history of Time's doings, past, present, and to come; Time, who has brought low alike the great and the little, the grand *Pasha* and the meanest slave; who makes republics beneath the ground that factions cannot destroy; Time, who opens the mysteries of the future, and "feeds oblivion with decay of things."

The Mahometan tombstones are distinguished, for the most part, by a head or representation of the turban carved in stone. Many of these have been broken off or greatly defaced during the wars which have raged from time to time between the tribes of the East. The inscriptions are in the Arabic or Turkish characters, and in the more modern tombs are often covered with gilding. Of course, I could read none of these histories of human virtues and human sorrows, but it is not likely that I lost a great deal of reliable information. The whole aspect of these cemeteries is desolate and ruinous in the extreme. There is no order or arrangement, except in the direction of the heads, which are all towards *Mecca*; the headstones seem to be scattered over the ground at random, pointed up in all directions, or lying prostrate in confusion. The earth is perfectly barren, and abounds in all sorts of abominations, too disgusting even for the gangs of voracious dogs that prowl among the abodes of the dead. It is a strange place, in every respect, to choose as a fashionable resort for pleasure and gossip; but, as the Turks say, in the name of the Prophet may they enjoy themselves.

There are other places of amusements, chiefly resorted to in the summer by the wealthier classes. Among these are the Sweet Waters of Europe, and the Sweet Waters of Asia, the villages of the Bosphorus, the Isles of the Princes, and various places in the country, within a few miles of the city. Steamers now ply all along the shores of the Bosphorus, to the Prince's Isles, to the seaport town nearest to *Brusa*, and other ports along the sea of *Marmora*. There are also, for the poorer classes, large omnibus caigues, in which for a few paces they can be landed at any village on the Bosphorus, from the Golden Horn to *Baykudere*. It was my intention to give you, in this letter, an account of my visit to *Santa Sophia* and the *Seraglio*, as well as to the principal mosques and public institutions of *Stamboul*; but I find it will require more time than I have at command. Next week you may expect something of the kind. There is also a trip up the Bosphorus, and an excursion from *Terrapia* to *Belgrade* to be glanced at; all of which are duly noted down for your edification. Meantime, a brief sketch of one of the principal sights to be seen here will serve to fill up a blank page, and perhaps afford a better idea of the nature of the Turkish Government than a learned essay on its political organization.

Learning that the Sultan was in the habit of making his exit once a week from some one of his palaces, and affording the public an opportunity of seeing his sublime person on horseback or in the royal caigue, while escorted by the officers of his court to some mosque selected for the occasion, I walked down to *Tofana* yesterday to witness this grand ceremony. There was quite a respectable array of republicans in our party to enjoy the novelty of this Sultanistic display of grandeur and condescension. On reaching the broad avenue between the palace and the gardens of the royal *harem*, we found it lined on both sides with officers and soldiers in all the pomp of court uniforms, fezzed and brass-buttoned, sworded, tasseled, embroidered, and gilt; to the very climax of civilized orientalism. The military uniform of the present day in Constantinople is a sad falling-off from the magnificence of the native costume under the earlier Sultans. Copying the Frank nations of Europe in all the inconveniences and absurdities of dress, the Turks are quite as awkward and as much out of their element in tight-laced coats, stiff collars, and scanty trousers, as the stiff Englishman or most vivacious Frenchman would be in their loose flowing robes and dignified turbans; and they have neither

the smart elegance which results from good taste, even in what is objectionable, or the judgment to adopt only what is useful or convenient. The turban, which has been cast aside for the fez, had the double advantage of protecting the head and eyes from the glare of the sun, as also of forming a becoming termination to the figure; but nothing can be more ridiculous than the skimpy red night-cap called a *fez* which now supplies its place. What can be expected of a people who wear such things on their heads? How can they entertain any but mongrel notions, when their brains are subjected to the daily process of broiling? If they were semi-barbarous under the turban, they are more than semi-imbelle under the *fez*. It must be admitted, however, that the present display of military costume and discipline was very much superior to what one ordinarily sees about the military stations of *Stamboul*. The guards and officers seem to be carefully chosen, and in general appearance are not inferior to those of more civilized nations.

Passing under the grated bridge which extends over the avenue connecting the gardens of the *harem* with the palace, we entered a large open square in front of the mosque. The entire space was encircled by lines of soldiers, standing in readiness to receive the royal pageant. To the left, at a respectful distance, stood some few hundred native spectators, but owing to our dress, and perhaps a certain respect inspired for us by the daring manner in which our dragoman, *Carlo*, made room for us, we were permitted to stand behind a line of soldiers directly in front of the mosque. It wanted a quarter of twelve: the Sultan was to appear precisely at noon. During the interval four or five servants were busily engaged in sweeping down the steps upon which his Highness was to ascend, and spreading thereupon rich cloths to be pressed by his royal feet. These were also carefully swept down two or three times in succession, so that not a speck should be left. By the time all this was accomplished there was a general stir, a low murmur of awe and expectation. No body appeared to say any thing, or do any thing, or see any thing, but it was perfectly apparent that the great *Abdul Meschid* was coming. There was an instinctive holding of breath, and an anxious looking up the avenue towards the gates of the palace. And now the murmurs of awe rise higher, the clatter of horses' feet is distinctly heard, the music strikes up, and out comes the sovereign Potentate of Turkey, mounted on a prancing steed, and surrounded by a legion of magnificent *Pashas*, likewise mounted on prancing steeds. Onward he comes, slowly and with solemn majesty. But his thoughts are on holy subjects; he looks neither to the right nor to the left, but straight towards the door of the mosque. A Sultan may condescend to bow before Allah and the Prophet, but he is too high a personage to bow to man; hats are pulled off and heads bowed in vain. He pays no attention to the homage; not even to his sovereigns, who have done him the honor to stand bare-headed before him these ten minutes for the sake of enjoying the show, unmolested by his minions! The royal dress worn on this occasion was quite simple, consisting of ordinary European trousers, an embroidered Turkish coat, and a fez, with a cloak thrown loosely over the shoulders. His face is pale and careworn, his person emaciated, and his appearance altogether *basin*. People say that he is drugged and stupefied, for certain political purposes; and certainly, if ever a poor fellow bore the marks of premature decay and imbecility of mind resulting from excess, it is *Abdul Meschid*.

Now, all hail to Allah and the Prophet! the Sultan has reached the door of the mosque. Bearded *Pashas*, glittering with buttons and gold lace, catch his bridle; and bearded *Pashas* again catch himself as he painfully dismounts. Slowly he ascends the steps upon the well-swept cloths—that aged young man of twenty-eight—supported on each side by a *Pasha*. A shout of joy and devotion rises on high! *Pashas*, officers, and all shout glory and honor to the Sultan! Long life and happiness to *Abdul Meschid*! All hail to Allah and the Prophet, the sovereign Potentate of the East has gone to prayers! Up goes the crier of the mosque on the highest minaret, and proclaims the important tidings to the world, "Allah akba! the sublimest of Sultans is at his devotions! God is great, and Mahomet is his Prophet!"

For the space of half an hour there is silence in the outer world; then comes forth the Sultan again, purified in body and soul. Again the bearded *Pashas* catch him in their arms, and help him on his horse. He is seated once more on the favored steed, still regardless of the crowd, a melancholy picture of resigned misery. The music strikes up, the royal pageant moves on, and *Abdul Meschid* is borne back to his palace to receive the congratulations of his devoted followers and the caresses of his loving wives.

I went away from this exhibition a thoughtful man. That very morning I had been reading in an American paper a tirade in favor of disunion, a series of resolutions passed at some sectional convention. Never before had the complete madness of the proposition occurred to me. What was it proposed to do? To annul the Confederacy of free States; to abandon all the blessings of liberty because of a single evil; to rush headlong from the highest eminence of prosperity and happiness that any nation upon earth has yet attained, into the dark abyss of anarchy and final despotism; to tear with sacrilegious hands the Constitution that has been bequeathed to us by the truest, and purest, and wisest of patriots that ever struggled for human rights and the perpetuity of human freedom; and bury the glorious galaxy of stars too deep in degradation to excite the contempt of the poorest despots that grovel beneath the ban of human hatred. It is not at home, surrounded by local influences, and blinded by the zeal of party, that we can appreciate the terrible imminence, the utter madness of this proposition. Go abroad, ye who would lightly cast away the priceless heritage of liberty, and study well the operation of other Governments; feel but for a single day the crushing effects of religious intolerance and military despotism; mingle with the suffering masses that no longer breathe their woes, but hope against hope in the very darkness of despair; behold the misery that you would bring upon the heads of a happy and prosperous people, and ask yourselves, is it well to talk of disunion? Roam from the mountain-steeps of the North to the genial plains of the South; linger among the mouldering monuments of the past; ponder over the power and the weakness of man, what he has been, what he might be, and what he is; behold the fairest hands that ever breathed the charm of romance over the pages of history now waste and desolate; look back from out the gloom of human depravity upon your own free and happy country, rising to the zenith of its prosperity, spreading its genial influences over the whole face of the earth; and say, would you be no longer a nation of freemen? Would you aspire to a page in future history as that people who have fallen lower than ever yet man has fallen?

Whatever may be the evils under which we labor at home, let us hope that they are but temporary; they are dust in the balance compared with the evils that afflict the nations of Europe. Let us bear them patiently, and look to the healing influences of time for the remedy. Above all, let us never cease to cherish, in the deepest recesses of our hearts, the memory of those immortal men who have bequeathed to us the blessings of an enlightened and liberal system of Government.

Yours, truly,

J. R. B.

JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

DECEMBER, 1851.

While you at home are congratulating each other on the return of a happy Christmas, and exchanging the compliments of the season, please to consider that a wandering fellow-citizen, who has your interests at heart, is seated this moment in a very cold room, with a pan of charcoal under his nose, engaged in writing a letter from Jerusalem. It is Christmas day; a very pleasant day at home, where one can sit down before a crackling fire and give himself up to serious thought over a glass of egg-nogg; but a miserable day in Jerusalem, where there is nothing but charcoal to warm the outward man, and more noxious recesses of our hearts, the memory of those immortal men who have bequeathed to us the blessings of an enlightened and liberal system of Government.

have three weeks' riding to perform before we reach Jerusalem, some mountains to get over, and *Baalbek* and *Damascus* to look at on the way. Of course you won't expect any thing new, except now and then a common-place truth, which is all the novelty I have to give you.

Any body stationed on the roof of *Demetrie's* hotel, near Beirut, might have seen, early in the morning on the 23d of November, with a good spyglass, a steamer bearing the Austrian flag, paddling its way into the harbor. The decks of that steamer were crowded with pilgrims of all nations—Turks, Arabs, Russian and Polish Jews, and Greeks; but conspicuous on the quarter-deck were two Americans, who might also have been seen with the spyglass above mentioned, one a tall slender gentleman with a red book in his hand, and the other rather shorter, but not too short, habited in the unpretending garb of a back-woodman, with a grave countenance. Any body might know in a moment that the first was a Southerner and the last no other than your friend and fellow-citizen, who has the pleasure of addressing you this letter.

The weather for more than two months previously, during our wanderings in the Levant, had been unusually fine; and for the past month, in Constantinople and Smyrna, we had enjoyed cloudless skies and a climate of delightful temperature. Don't imagine, however, that I am going to trouble you with a description of all the fine views of bare mountains, palm trees, and mosques that we saw along the shores of *Asia Minor*, or the glorious sunsets among the Greek Islands. Such scenes are for artists and poets, not for practical men like us, who go about the world to study the realities of life and dissipate the mists of fancy.

Scarcely had we cast anchor in the harbor of Beirut, (which, by the way, like all the harbors on the coast of Syria, is a very bad one,) when we were boarded by a whole legion of hotel-keepers and guides. Books of recommendation were thrust at us by lusty fellows in petticoats, who talked English, French, Italian, and Arabic all in one breath; cards with views of splendid hotels that never have existed in Beirut and probably never will; private hints whispered in our ears by disinterested persons, and all sorts of strange things yelled at us by the boatmen, who crowded round the steamer. In five minutes I verily believe there was more talking done on that occasion, without a single movement being made towards disembarking the passengers, than one would hear during the whole process of clearing a California steamer. It is one of the peculiarities of oriental travel that the moment a steamer drops her anchor the officers labor under the idea that the contract of transportation has been fulfilled; there is nothing more to be done but obstruct as far as practicable all attempts at getting ashore. Even where there is no quarantine to perform and no police or passport nuisance, they are so loath to part company with their passengers that I have seen them turn in and go to sleep for the purpose of passing the time agreeably, leaving a man stationed at the gangway, who always says, "Excuse, senor, you can't go ashore yet." Can a person of nervous temperament, who has suffered all the horrors of nausea for two or three days, and who feels certain that the authorities on shore, who are expected every moment, will never come, in consequence of smoking the *chibouk*, till they fall asleep, and sleeping till they are ready to smoke the *chibouk* again—can one, I say, be tried at the bar of public opinion and justly censured under such circumstances for saying dammit?

The season was late for a tour through Syria and Palestine. Already the rain was a month behind the time; it might come to-morrow or it might not; but that it would come before very long was regarded as a certainty. Travellers returning from the Nile usually cross the little Desert to Gaza early in March, so as to take Palestine in the spring, or somewhat sooner, by Mount *Sinal* and Arabia Petrea. The season is then delightful; the country covered with verdure, and of course Palestine is seen in its most favorable aspect, before the earth has become parched by the scorching heat of summer. With us it was not a matter of choice. We had spent the time in rambling about the Levant, and had just a month or six weeks to spare, and it was Palestine now or never.

Demetrie, a fine looking Greek, who carried every thing before him by his splendid Albanian costume, pushed the babbling crowd aside and took possession of us without opposition. His moustache was the blackest and thickest and most conspicuous I ever saw; it had killed half the Arab girls in Beirut, and well entitled the bearer to his distinguished reputation as *Demetrie*, the conqueror of the female sex. But *Demetrie* is also distinguished as a dragoman. He has been the guide of English lords and Russian counts without number; has made fortunes and spent them with a facility unknown to the cool-headed inhabitants of more temperate climes; he has gone through all the varieties of life, and is now proprietor of the principal hotel beyond the walls of Beirut; and I can conscientiously say to all travellers that he is a prince of a fellow, and that his hotel is the cleanest and most commodious in Syria.

Our arrival at the hotel we were beset by guides, all eagerly thrusting at us their certificates of character. From the number we chose *Yusuf Simon Badra*, who appeared to have the strongest recommendations, and who was also highly spoken of by the residents at Beirut. In making a bargain with a dragoman it is considered safest to have a written contract, signed before the consul, specifying every thing to be furnished by the dragoman, the number of horses, mules, &c., and the compensation. The usual price, including tents, provisions, horses, and every thing necessary, is one pound sterling a day for each person; but, as the season was late, we agreed with *Yusuf* for ninety-six piastres, or about four dollars each. Having now made the tour and acquired some experience in bargain-making, I am very sure I could travel through Syria and Palestine for about half that; not of course in the luxurious style of fashionable tourists, who go merely for pleasure, but in quite good enough style for any person who desires to acquire knowledge of the country on the most economical terms.

Leaving Beirut at 2 P. M., on the 25th of November, we passed, not far beyond the suburbs, the spot pointed out as the scene of the remarkable battle between *St. George* and the dragon, and soon after crossed the pass of *Xorxes*. The road now lay along the sea beach, which extends to the rocky point, five or six miles from the town, called the Roman pass. On the rocks to the right of the road are some Latin inscriptions carved in tablets, and in some places the remains of *bassos reliefs*. Further on a few miles we descended into the beautiful little valley of *El Kelb*, or *Dog river*, where stand the remains of a bridge built by the Romans. Silk is manufactured to some extent in this country, and our road frequently lay through flourishing plantations of mulberry. The ground is cultivated in a rude manner most of the way along the shores of Syria, and we passed through many small fields of sugar-cane, irrigated by water from the mountain streams, which is conducted in narrow walled ditches through the fields. Covered as the whole face of the country is with stones, yet the tilled parts are apparently fertile and yield abundant crops. On the slopes of Mount Lebanon are many small villages, similar to those met with throughout Syria. The houses are but one story high, built of stone, with flat mud roofs, and at a distance have the appearance of mud boxes put out on the hills to dry. The village of *Zuk*, which we passed at a distance, is prettily situated, but is like all other Syrian villages, a wretched abode of men, women, and vermin. We met on the road several of those strange beings the Druzes, a religious sect wearing a costume peculiar to themselves. The head dress of the women points upward like an immense horn, about two feet long; the men wear an indescribable dress of ragged robes, picturesque at first sight, but not to be too closely scrutinized. The Druzes inhabit the country chiefly along Mount Lebanon and the neighborhood, and sprung originally from the *Kamathians*, one of the *Mahometan* sects. We met also during the afternoon several *Pashas* and their retinues of servants, coming from *Damascus* and Tripoli, and occasionally travelling merchants with their caravans of merchandise, bound to Beirut from Aleppo and other interior towns. About four miles beyond the valley of *El Kelb*, we came to another beautiful little valley, sheltered by high mountains, running down to the seashore, where there is a small harbor, which our guide informed us was occupied by the British forces during the storming of Beirut in 1841. Here is situated the village of *Juna*; and the mountain sides are dotted with small houses and terraced with stone walls to a considerable

height, the most unpromising patches of tillable ground being thus made available. *Yusuf* soon had our tent up in the midst of a young orchard of mulberry trees; and it was not long before we had on our table a good supper of chicken, rice, preserves, and coffee; for, in justice to our dragoman, I must not omit to mention that he fed us in excellent style, and gave us so many luxuries in the way of tables, bedsteads, chairs, napkins, and different courses of plate that the poor mules were quite laden down, and we were obliged to protest against this effeminate style of living, especially as we soon found it to be at the expense of time, an important object with us at this season. Contrasted with the sort of travelling to which I had been accustomed in California, it was ridiculously civilized, and made me feel much less independent than when I coursed through the plains of the *Ojitas* and *San Jose* with nothing but my mule and saddle-bags and slept under the trees. Coffee and *chibouks* finished the evening. The clouds had been threatening for some time, and before we were comfortably in bed, they began to pour down upon us such a torrent of rain that we soon found the tent but a poor protection, and the wind blew in gusts so sudden and violent that we momentarily expected to be covered up in a ruin of canvass. At last we had to make a retreat to a khan down on the beach, where we were fortunate enough to get a tolerable room. The khans, or houses for the accommodation of travellers throughout Syria, are usually large stone buildings, without furniture, and filthy to an extreme. Of course Frank travellers only resort to them when the weather does not permit of living in tents; and many prefer suffering from cold and rain to encountering the vermin with which the khans are infested. It is always best, however, when the season is at all unfavorable, to sleep in houses; for whatever may be the inconveniences of living among mules, asses, fleas, and smoking Turks, they are not so great as those of sickness in a foreign land, where no assistance can be had. Many a traveller has laid his bones in Syria in consequence of wet nights and sunny days. We here took the precaution, as in all future cases, to have the first layer of fleas swept out, leaving the partially dried mat below; and thus we commenced our first night of Syrian travel. For hours I lay musing over the many scenes I had passed through during the last few years, but the fulfilment of the wind, mingled with the measured break of the surf upon the beach, at length lulled me to sleep, and I slept well by their familiar music. It rained hard most of the night. Towards morning the wind had moderated, yet several small vessels in the port bore up their anchors and stood to sea as if they expected worse weather. This was not a cheering prospect for our contemplated tour. We had, in starting from the khan, the first trial of patience to which, in common with all who travel in the East, we were doomed to be frequently subjected—I mean the loss of time. The Arabs, Turks, and indeed all the oriental races, are singularly independent of time; in fact, with the exception of its use in estimating distances, they appear to have no knowledge of its value whatever. We were to have started at six, but it was nine before we got rightly underway.

Our Arab muleteers were slow, and although *Yusuf* swore himself completely out of breath, and to the best of my knowledge entirely exhausted the vocabulary of strong expressions in Arabic, they made no effort to hurry the matter in the least. On the contrary, I was rather struck with the resigned manner in which they bore his violent reproaches and fercious denunciations, and the cool air with which they puffed their *chibouks* after the slightest exertion. On the beach, as we passed along through the village of *Juna*, we observed the wreck of a vessel—one of the many driven ashore on this coast every winter. In Beirut we were told that not less than eight or ten were lost in this way every winter; the coast of Syria from Tripoli to *Damietta* affording no secure harbor for shipping. The road beyond *Juna* to the next point or pass we found rocky and precipitous, much like what we had passed, only still more tiresome. It should be borne in mind that roads in Syria are not like the roads we are accustomed to at home, which, bad as they are compared with the roads through Italy, have yet some pretensions to the name; but here to dignify them by such a name is a complete perversion of the word. The bridge paths of Switzerland are magnificent highways compared with them, and in thus speaking of them I merely adopt the ordinary language of travellers. I have seen nothing like them except in crossing the Isthmus of Panama; imagine that Isthmus extended an indefinite number of miles, and you have some idea of Syrian roads. Fortunately, the horses of this country are remarkable for their sureness of foot and powers of endurance.

Not far beyond *Juna* is the bed of a river called *El Mahmilton*, over which is the arch of an old Roman bridge, conspicuous for its massive proportions and fine architectural style. Nothing remained of the river but its bed, most of the streams throughout the country having been dried by the long and uninterrupted drought for the last eight months. In the winter this stream is no doubt swollen to something like a river by the mountain torrents, although in speaking of rivers here, as indeed throughout Europe and the East, it is not to be supposed that what we call rivers in America are meant. Every little creek in the Old World is dignified by the name of river, and every duck pond is called a lake. It would be necessary to go beyond the limits of a mere letter to give an account of our journey for the next three days. We stopped at *Jebel Batron* and Tripoli, and on the third day commenced our ascent of Mount Lebanon. At Aheben, claimed by some authorities as the Garden of Eden, we were obliged to take a guide, the path being altogether obliterated in some of the table grounds by recent floods of rain. As we approached the cedars we went down into a ravine, and soon after passed along the ledge of a profound gorge, extending to the depth of several hundred feet. A village, distant by Syrian measurement two hours from Aheben, lies on the left of the gorge, not far from which is a celebrated spot, visited by many of the pilgrims as a place of peculiar interest. Our time, however, being limited, we passed on, and in another hour entered the celebrated grove of cedars—a mere patch of green in the bare and desert hollow of the mountain. It was cold and gloomy within the shadowy enclosure, and quite deserted. Not a living thing was to be seen, and all was silent as death, save an occasional plaintive note from some lonesome bird among the branches. Entering by a ravine below, we ascended some distance among the younger growth of trees till we reached an elevation a few hundred yards higher up, upon an elevation a few hundred yards higher up, upon which stands a rude stone chapel, built by some of the Frank monks, in the midst of the ancient grove, and still used by Christian pilgrims in their annual vigils of devotion. There are twelve veteran and storm-beaten trees, and the pointed out as the original cedars of Lebanon; and the best authorities, I believe, concur in admitting these to be the veritable cedars referred to in the Scriptures. Certainly they bear every indication of extraordinary antiquity; and there is no reason to doubt that they existed in very remote ages. From these have sprung, during the lapse of centuries, the surrounding grove, consisting of nearly four hundred trees of various degrees of antiquity, but all of the same species. The chapel was quite deserted, the priests having left some days before for the more genial climate of Tripoli. It is the custom for all the inhabitants of the vicinity to depart for the valleys below on the approach of winter, which is very severe and protracted at this elevation. Our guide pointed out the height to which the snow reached during the previous winter on some of the trees, and we judged it to be not less than twenty feet. It often covers the walls of the chapel entirely up to the roof, completely blocking up all means of ingress and exit. At such a time of course it would be very difficult, if not altogether impracticable, to exist in this region; but, if we are to credit the strange narratives related to us by our Arabs, it has been done by the aid of miracles, and may be done again. Elseas, one of our interpreters, assured us that there was once a dark man who came over from a distant country, and who, in consequence of having committed a great sin, was resolved to expiate his offence by starving himself to death in the hollow of one of the old cedars. There he fixed his abode, and prayed in secret, and such was the efficacy of his prayers that he subsisted for two years on nourishing waters that were sent down to him from the branches of the tree by miraculous power; and he suffered neither from heat nor from cold, but at the expiration of

his voluntary penance took his departure and returned a happy man to his own country. To render the story strictly credible the *how* was pointed out to us, and *Elseas*, who was a Christian of the Greek church, said his prayers under the shadow of the old cedar. With other strange histories of a similar kind the simple natives entertained us, while we sat down under the wide-branched trees, spread our cloth upon the ground, and refreshed ourselves after the ride from Aheben.

As soon as we had finished our repast we set out to make a more thorough examination of the ancient cedars, or the original twelve, in which the chief interest is centered. A required no great research to convince us of their great age, which is strikingly apparent in their gnarled and time-worn trunks. Many of the branches have become sapless, and are fast rotting away; others are broken off by the force of many tempests, or have fallen of their own accord from sheer old age; new ones have sprung out, and young shoots continue to supply the ravages worked by time; the trunks here of vast circumference, and are composed of diverse parts consolidated, some of them perhaps the growth of different ages. All the old trees and many of the younger ones have large pieces cut out of their trunk, upon which are carved the names of visitors who from time to time have been attracted to this remote region. Among these I noticed the name of *Lamarctine*, said to have been carved by an Arab while the great sentimentalist was going into ecstasies in his comfortable quarters below. There were several American names, but none of very recent date—only two within two years. In the register which is kept on the altar of the chapel I saw several English, French, and Oriental names. Some of the remarks were curious enough. One gentleman, who probably imagined the cedars to be red or pink, with blue tops, like those in the panoramas, inscribed his name on the register with this piece of intelligence: "Visited the Cedars of Lebanon, and was greatly disappointed." Another traveller informed me that he could see much larger and finer trees at home without trouble or expense. What any body expects to see except the Cedars of Lebanon, I am at a loss to conceive. One does not travel three days over bad roads to witness a rare-show, or see simply a few cedar trees, because they are cedars; but, if I understand it, the object is to see the Cedars of Lebanon mentioned in the Scriptures; and there they are without doubt. They can be seen by any body who has eyes to see. It is true they are only cedars, but they are very wonderful, as well from their great antiquity as from the Scriptural interest attached to them.

Messrs. Lansing and Burnett, American missionaries at Damascus, visited this region last summer, and carefully counted the cedars, both old and young. They also made some measurements of a very interesting character. The entire grove, according to their estimates, consists of four hundred trees; the average circumference of the original twelve is about twenty-five feet, and one was found to measure upwards of thirty. The trunks of the more ancient cedars do not rise to any great height before they branch out into enormous limbs, commencing ten or fifteen feet from the ground, some perhaps twenty feet. The branches are very crooked and tortuous, partly decayed, as before stated, and gnarled with the frosts and tempests of ages. It is said that no other specimens of the kind are found in any part of the world, except such as have been transplanted from this grove; but *Messrs. Lansing and Burnett* ascertained to their entire satisfaction that other cedars of the same species do exist in the mountains of Syria. The wood is white, and has a pleasant perfume; and to this odoriferous essence is made in the Scriptures. It is not stronger, however, than the scent of the ordinary red cedar, perhaps less apparent.

From the front of the chapel there is a very fine view of the valley below, extending entirely to the sea. The reefs opposite *Ras Tripoli* are distinctly visible on a clear day. Computed by the time required